

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1201

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, TU

SUBJ: GRAND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY RECONVENES NOVEMBER 1

SUMMARY: THE TURKISH GRAND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, IN RECESS SINCE JULY 4, WILL RECONVENE NOVEMBER 1, WITH THE FIRST ORDER OF BUSINESS BEING THE ELECTION OF PRESIDING OFFICERS FOR BOTH THE SENATE AND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. EARLY INDICATIONS ARE THAT THESE ELECTIONS MAY BE BITTERLY CONTESTED. FURTHER, THE RETURN OF THE PARLIAMENTARIANS MARKS THE END OF A "GRACE PERIOD" FOR THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT DURING WHICH IT WAS FREE FROM PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRIES AND THE THREAT OF A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE. END SUMMARY.

1. THE ELECTION OF PRESIDING OFFICERS IN THE UPPER AND LOWER HOUSES SINCE 1961 HAS BEEN SUBJECT TO A "GENTELMAN'S AGREEMENT" WHICH GIVES THE PRESIDING OFFICERSHIP TO A REPRESENTATIVE OF THE NUMERICALLY LARGEST PARTY IN EITHER HOUSE. IF THE AGREEMENT IS FOLLOWED AGAIN THIS YEAR, THE SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY WILL BE FROM THE REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (RPP) AND THE JUSTICE PARTY (JP) WILL PROVIDE A PRESIDENT FOR THE SENATE.

2. HOWEVER, THERE HAS BEEN MUCH RECENT MANEUVERING, PUBLICLY AND

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PRIVATELY, FOR A SENATE CANDIDATE WHO WOULD REPRESENT THE NATIONALIS

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FRONT COALITION RATHER THAN SIMPLY THE JP. ALTERNATELY, THERE HAS ALSO BEEN SPECULATION THAT THE JP HOPED TO OBTAIN SUFFICIENT TRANSFERS OF PARTY ALLEGIANCE FROM DEMOCRATIC PARTY (DP), REPUBLICAN RELIANCE (RR) AND INDEPENDENT RANKS TO EDGE OUT THE RPP AS LARGEST PARTY IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. FOR ITS PART, THE RPP WOULD PREFER THE CONTINUATION OF THE PRESENT GENTELMAN'S AGREEMENT. AS A WARNING NOT RPT NOT TO ALTER THE PRESENT STATE OF AFFAIRS, THE SUGGESTION HAS BEEN FLOATED THAT THE RPP (ASSISTED BY RPP-LEANING LIFE AND PRESIDENTIALLY-APPOINTED SENATORS) MIGHT TRY TO PREVENT THE ELECTION OF A JP SENATOR AS PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE AND MIGHT ALSO IMPEDE THE DAILY OPERATIONS OF THE SENATE. (ALTHOUGH THE SENATE PLAYS A SECONDARY ROLE TO THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, THE RPP OPPOSITION COULD TRY TO UTILIZE THE INCREASED STRENGTH IT GAINED IN THE OCTOBER 12 ELECTION TO DELAY SOMEWHAT THE PASSAGE OF GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION.)

3. AS NOVEMBER 1 APPROACHES, BOTH MAJOR PARTIES HAVE INCREASED THEIR POLITICAL ACTIVITIES. THE JP HAS HAD SEVERAL INDUCTION CEREMONIES AS FORMER DP MEMBERS HAVE JOINED THE JP (ALTHOUGH NOT PARLIAMENTARIANS). AN INDEPENDENT DEPUTY, RIZA POLAT, JOINED THE RPP OCTOBER 28, MAKING THE NEW VOT TOTALS AS FOLLOWS

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SENATE

RPP	190	60		
JP	159	78		
NATIONAL SALVATION PARTY (NSP)			48	5
RR	10	4		
NATIONALIST ACTION		3		1
DP	24	--		
TURKISH UNITY PARTY		1		--
INDEPENDENTS	13		2	
VACANT	2	--		
PRESIDENTIALLY APPOINTED		--		-5
LIFE	--	19		

4. PARTY RHETORIC IS ALSO BECOMING MORE HEATED:

(A) AT THE CEREMONY FOR POLAT, RPP CHAIRMAN ECEVIT CRITICIZED THE "INDECISIVE AND POWERLESS" ATTITUDE OF THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SAID THAT SINCE THE GOVERNMENT "FACED DIFFICULTIES WITHIN ITSELF," IT HAD NOT FOUND "LEVEL GROUND" ON WHICH TO BUILD A DOMESTIC OR FOREIGN POLICY. "IF IT CONTINUES IN THIS WAY," SAID ECEVIT, "IT WILL BE A QUESTION OF A NEW GOVERNMENT CRISIS."

(B) PRIMIN DEMIRES RESPONDED TO THE CHARGE ON OCTOBER 29, STATING THAT ECEVIT "SHOULD KNOW WELL THE INHERITANCE HE LEFT. WHAT WE HAVE TAKEN OVER IS NOT ONLY CYPRUS...BUT THE ATTITUDE OF

WORLD PUBLIC OPINION AND THE EMBARGO. THE POSSIBILITY OF A GOVERNMENT CRISIS BASED ON IRRESPONSIBLE ASSERTIONS CANNOT BE RECONCILED WITH SERIOUSNESS."

5. COMMENT: THE RECONVENING OF PARLIAMENT REPRESENTS THE OPENING OF A NEW "POLITICAL SEASON" IN TURKEY. THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT'S LEGISLATIVE RECORD BEFORE THE JULY RECESS WAS SPOTTY--NO MAJOR DEFEATS BUT VERY LITTLE ACTUALLY LEGISLATED. THE OPPOSITION, HAVING DONE LESS WELL IN THE OCTOBER 12 ELECTIONS THAT IT HAD HOPED, WILL PROBABLY LOOK UPON THE OPENING OF PARLIAMENT AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE ITS POSITION BY FURTHER WEAKENING THE COALITION. THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT IS NUMERICALLY STRONGER IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY (NOW HAVING AN APPROXIMATE OPERATIONAL MARGIN OF 18 VOTES COMPARED TO THE FOUR VOTE MARGIN OF ITS VOTE OF CONFIDENCE) AND IS THUS IN LESS DANGER OF LOSING A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE THAT IT WAS PRIOR TO THE RECESS. HOWEVER, THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND ITS STRESSES HAVE MADE THE COALITION EVEN LESS COHESIVE THAN BEFORE. THE ELECTION OF PRESIDING OFFICERS WILL PROVIDE A FIRST LOOK AT THE EXTENT OF COOPERATION OR COMPETITION WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT COALITION AS WELL AS VIS-A-VIS THE OPPOSITION DURING THE COMING LEGISLATIVE SESSION.
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